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Delegates to the conference of experts on sites and monuments of art and history conducted by UNESCO in Paris in October were asked to submit a statement regarding the status of preservation in their own countries. Mr. Ronald F. Lee, Secretary of the National Council and Chief Historian of the National Park Service, was the American representative. His admirable summary, the product of his long experience in this field, serves as background for Professor Thomas J. Wertenbaker's "Historic Restorations in the United States," which was the feature of the September Quarterly Report. Like Professor Wertenbaker's talk, Mr. Lee's account is printed here for the first time.

# THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

by Ronald F. Lee

## I

Preservation of historic and architectural monuments in the United States began largely as a series of voluntary efforts by various societies. One of the earliest instances of this kind was the rescue of Mount Vernon in 1859 by a group of public-spirited persons who, with their successors, have preserved the home of George Washington for the nation throughout the past ninety years. Over this long period, voluntary efforts for preservation have grown steadily in number and importance. By 1933, quasi-public historical and patriotic societies, such as the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, were responsible for half of the four hundred Historic house museums then open to the public. In recent years, the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg, a project made possible only through the generosity of Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., has exerted wide national influence. The work of societies, and the voluntary support of private persons remain today a major factor in the preservation movement in the United States.

While the active participation of the Federal Government in the preservation of the natural landscape began with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, a sense of national responsibility for the protection of historic and architectural monuments was first awakened in 1889 by reports of the impending destruction of prehistoric Indian ruins in the Southwest. A year later, veterans of the Civil War launched a movement to commemorate the battlefields on which they had fought, such as Gettysburg and Chickamauga. Amid numerous Federal laws affecting individual monuments enacted in the following two generations, four general measures stand out as landmarks in the preservation movement. The earliest of these, the Antiquities Act of 1906, established a procedure for protecting neglected historic, prehistoric and scientific landmarks situated on government-owned land, by authorizing the President to proclaim the more important ones national monuments, and by requiring special permits for archaeological excavation or collecting within the remainder. While numerous national monuments were soon established under this authority, no central monuments administration was created, responsibility for the preservation of antiquities being distributed among several government agencies.

The second general measure, the National Park Service Act of 1916, established a federal bureau in the Department of the Interior with sole responsibility for the great scenic properties of the nation, such as Yellowstone and Yosemite, and with responsibility for a portion of the national heritage in historic and architectural monuments. By this legislation, as subsequent events have demonstrated, both the scenic and historic properties of the nation were eventually to be fully consolidated into one National Park System. This result was finally accomplished by the third measure, part of the Reorganization of Government of 1933 (Executive Orders of 10 June and 28 July), which grouped together with the national parks, for administration by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior, all the eighty-odd historic and archaeological properties belonging to the United States government. Since 1933, therefore, in the Federal sphere of action, the United States has had one central monuments administration, with one head, one set of policies, and one national program.

Growing interest in the American background soon led to the important Historic Sites Act of 1935. This enactment was based upon a study of European legislation and practice, following the precedents of Anglo-Saxon rather than Roman law. In general, this legislation declares it to be a national policy to preserve for public use, historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States; grants a long list of powers to the Secretary of the Interior to enable him to carry out this policy through the National Park Service; and establishes an Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments, consisting of experts in the fields of history, archaeology, architecture, and human geography, to advise on the national program. Adoption of the Historic Sites Act marked a major forward step in conservation legislation and it stands today as the basic law governing the preservation of American antiquities.

Government measures for the preservation of monuments have not been limited to the federal sphere of action. A growing number of state and local governments have also adopted legislation to protect their antiquities, and several conduct important programs of preservation. Pennsylvania and Ohio are outstanding examples of this, among the states; while Charleston, South Carolina, and New Orleans, Louisiana, among the cities, have enacted progressive zoning measures for the protection of their historic quarters. There is reason to believe that the participation of state and local governments in historical conservation may increase rather than diminish in the years ahead.

Since the Civil War of 1861-65, the historic and architectural heritage of the United States has fortunately been spared the terrible destruction of war but its perpetuation unimpaired for future generations - apart from any possibility of conflict - may not be readily assumed. In spite of much excellent legislation to protect this heritage, urban and industrial development, and private and public construction, accelerated since 1945, have placed many significant historic sites and buildings in jeopardy. The construction of huge dams and impoundment of water in vast reservoirs, now in progress in the nation's major river valleys, will inundate thousands of sites of prehistoric occupation which contain unique data for the reconstruction of human history on the North American continent unless archaeological recovery work is carried out in advance of flooding. The impact of growing and shifting population, new residential, commercial and transportation developments, and the changing ways of life in post-war society, are bringing new and critical pressures on many historic and architectural monuments and their surroundings.

Within the past few years, this pressure on the steadily diminishing number of significant monuments has produced a renewed movement throughout the nation for the preservation, marking and interpretation of historic sites and buildings. In 1947, from spontaneous interest among distinguished leaders in the fields of architecture, history, archaeology, civic planning and government, a national society was organized to give additional national

impetus to this cultural and historical movement. The National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings is an affiliated group of some forty national, regional, state and local organizations, six ex officio representatives of the Federal Government, and a number of interested individual persons, who have joined together to supplement the work of government agencies and to further, through voluntary means, the preservation and interpretation of sites and buildings significant in American history and culture. The Council is sponsoring through Act of Congress the creation of a National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States, similar in many respects to the British National Trust, with authority to receive gifts, bequests, or devises of property or funds, and to hold, maintain, and exhibit monuments of history or architecture. The National Trust will be clothed with all the dignity and power appropriate to the guardianship of selected national treasures preserved for the entire nation.

Thus, in recent years, voluntary effort, so traditional in the United States, is again coming forward to support and supplement the work of the Federal and State governments in preserving historic sites and buildings.

II

It is natural that policies and methods designed to perpetuate the historic and architectural monuments of the United States should have varied considerably in different times and places among the various conservation agencies and groups. It is possible, however, to offer some generalizations representing present-day thought in the United States regarding the survey and classification of historic sites and buildings and regarding policies and techniques suitable for their preservation and restoration.

Although useful but disconnected efforts to record local examples of domestic architecture had been made earlier, no national plan to secure an accurate and detailed record of the historic monuments of America was launched until the inception of the Historic American Building Survey in 1933. Aimed primarily at the creation of a permanent graphic record of the architectural survivals of early dwellers in the United States, this Survey is a continuing project jointly sponsored by the National Park Service, the American Institute of Architects and the Library of Congress. During its most active years, from 1933-1942, there were compiled approximately 24,000 measured drawings and 26,000 photographs of some 6,400 historic structures, providing a rich and diversified record of the less known, "vernacular" architecture of the country, invaluable to students of social history as well as architecture. However, as emphasis was laid upon the recording as of structures known to be in danger of being destroyed, and as the survey was most complete in areas where architects were most readily available, buildings of pre-eminent architectural and historical importance were often not included in the Survey. The collected archives of American architecture which have resulted from this great project can nevertheless, in many respects, stand comparison with the national inventories of monuments undertaken in Europe.

While thousands of historic and architectural monuments are worthy of recording, only a very limited number, possessing superlative interest and importance to the nation, can be expected to benefit from direct protection by the United States government. The problem of selecting this small number from among many alternatives, each with its determined proponents, is a difficult task. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 placed this responsibility upon the National Park Service and created an Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments, whose distinguished members have among their many important duties, that of recommending which historic sites and buildings are eligible for preservation under the provisions of national legislation. To decide which sites or buildings are worthy of national recognition, the National Park Service with the advice and guidance of the Advisory Board conducts an independent study of each historic site or building suggested

for preservation, in order to determine its relative importance and worthiness for national recognition. This study, known as the Historic Sites Survey, has produced a significant body of unpublished historical and architectural information regarding many of the nation's major monuments.

The act of classification, in the United States, carries no legal implication, and does not diminish the right of the owner of an historic monument to do as he pleases with it. The classified list of nationally important historic sites and buildings which is prepared by the Advisory Board from the Historic Sites Survey is confidential and is used primarily as a guide by legislators and administrators responsible for acting upon specific preservation proposals. With a few important exceptions, the Federal government at present preserves historic sites and buildings only by outright ownership.

In considering questions of classification, the Advisory Board has found it convenient to establish fifteen categories of historic and architectural monuments and five categories of prehistoric monuments. Each category embraces the most important historic sites and buildings associated with a major phase of the history of the country. Typical categories are "Sites relating to Early Man in America", "English Colonization to 1700", and "The War for American Independence". Together the twenty categories reflect very nearly the entire range of human history in what is now the United States, from remote prehistoric beginnings to very recent times. By this approach, the Advisory Board aims toward a well-rounded list of monuments which will ensure that the National Park System is thoroughly representative of every important phase of American history and culture.

As an additional aid to the process of classification, criteria have been developed which are equally applicable to monuments in any category. Originally utilized by the Advisory Board, these criteria are gradually coming into wider use. Present-day thought on this subject among most preservation groups in the United States may be illustrated by quoting in its entirety a document, issued in November 1948 by the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings, which also incorporates much of the experience of the National Park Service.

Criteria to be used in Selecting Historic Sites and Buildings

1. <u>The prime requisite is historical significance</u>

The chief determining factor is that the area or structure must possess either certain important historical associations which entitle it to a position of high rank in the history of the nation, state, or region in which it lies; or, in the case of a structure, be in itself of sufficient antiquity and artistic or architectural significance to deserve a position of high rank, even though not having other important historical associations. These qualities exist:

a. In such historic structures or sites as are naturally the points or bases in which the broad political, social, or cultural history of the nation, state, or region is best exemplified and from which the visitor can grasp the larger patterns of national, state or regional history.

b. In such monuments and areas as are significant because of their associations with key figures or important events in national, state or regional limits or because of their relationship to other monuments or areas.

c. In structures or sites exemplifying in a high degree the history and achievements of aboriginal man in America or of outstanding scientific importance for the light that they shed on this subject.

NOTE: Structures or sites of recent historical importance relating to events and persons within the last fifty years will not, as a rule, be eligible for consideration under the standards set forth in a. b. and c.

2. Suitability, as measured by the following standards, will be an important consideration.

a. Surviving historical remains

While it is sometimes possible to justify the preservation of an historic site even though no physical remains have survived, the deciding factor in most cases will be the presence of important original structures or other physical remains.

b. Other Physical characteristics

The encroachments of business, industry, housing, and traffic upon a structure or site must be considered if historical values are thereby seriously impaired and public use and appreciation inhibited.

c. Location with respect to accessibility, necessary utilities, and protection is a factor to be considered.

d. The adaptability of the historic property to effective treatment in the interest of public use and enjoyment will be considered. The cost of necessary treatment and development must not be beyond the means of the sponsoring agency or individual undertaking the project.

e. The extent to which the integrity of the historic structure or site has been preserved will be an important consideration. Integrity is a composite quality connoting original workmanship, original location, and intangible elements of feeling and association. Generally speaking, it is better to preserve than repair, better to repair than restore, better to restore than to construct. However, when a project calls for the restoration or reconstruction of historic structures which have long been destroyed, it is important that such work be done in accordance with scientific methods and with principles of good taste.

f. Closely allied to (d) is the question of reasonableness of the cost of proper maintenance of the area and its developed features.

g. The proposed boundaries of the historic monument project should be adequate to ensure proper preservation of historic features and public appreciation of their historical significance.

h. It is desirable for the project to have a place in national, state, or regional plans for the preservation of historic sites and monuments.

i. The proposed program of public use for historic structures and sites should be consistent with their proper and dignified preservation and with reasonable public access thereto.

j. Consideration will be given to the responsibility of the proposed administering agency as determined by (a) legal authority, (b) adequacy of financing, and (c) competency of staff."

III

Generally speaking, preservation and restoration policies in the United States may be said to represent an American adaptation of modern British and European experience. The nation entered upon the task of conserving its monuments so late in the nineteenth century that the controversy between the philosophies of Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin was scarcely felt. Preservation practices which characterize the recent period abroad have been widely accepted, at least in theory, as the most suitable ones to follow here. In those instances, in which long-vanished historic buildings have been reconstructed in their entirety - of which there are some prominent examples - the practice is usually defended as the exception rather than the rule, the principal emphasis being upon preservation of structures which have survived to the present day.

The restoration policy of the National Park Service, as developed by the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments, generally reflects prevailing opinion on this subject in America. Similar restoration principles have been announced by the directors of such well-known quasi-public projects as the restorations of Colonial Williamsburg and of Stratford, the birthplace of Robert E. Lee. While there are some variations in emphasis, the published policies of these and other organizations engaged in parallel work compare closely in most important respects to those of the Federal government. Despite wide theoretical agreement, however, there remain examples of divergence in practice among preservation groups which would require full discussion in a more comprehensive review of restoration policies and practices in America than is possible here.

The general restoration policy, recommended by the Advisory Board and adopted by the National Park Service in 1938 as its official viewpoint, follows:

"The motives governing these activities are several, often conflicting: aesthetic, archaeological and scientific, and educational. Each has its values and its disadvantages.

"Educational motives often suggest complete reconstitution, as in their hey-day, of vanished, ruinous or remodelled buildings and remains. This has often been regarded as requiring removal of subsequent additions, and has involved incidental destruction of much archaeological and historical evidence, as well as of aesthetic values arising from age and picturesqueness.

"The demands of scholarship for the preservation of every vestige of architectural and archaeological evidence - desirable in itself - might, if rigidly satisfied, leave the monument in conditions which give the public little idea of its major historical aspect or importance.

"In aesthetic regards, the claims of unity or original form or intention, of variety of style in successive periods of building and remodelling, and of present beauty of texture and weathering may not always be wholly compatible.

"In attempting to reconcile these claims and motives, the ultimate guide must be the tact and judgment of the men in charge. Certain observations may, however, be of assistance to them:

(1) No final decision should be taken as to a course of action before reasonable efforts to exhaust the archaeological and documentary evidence as to the form and successive transformation of the monument.

(2) Complete record of such evidence, by drawings, notes and transcripts should be kept, and in no case should evidence offered by the monument itself be destroyed or covered up before it has been fully recorded.

(3) It is well to bear in mind the saying: 'Better preserve than repair, better repair than restore, better restore than construct.'

(4) It is ordinarily better to retain genuine old work of several periods, rather than arbitrarily to 'restore' the whole, by new work, to its aspect at a single period.

(5) This applies even to work of periods later than those now admired, provided their work represents a genuine creative effort.

(6) In no case should our own artistic preferences or prejudices lead us to modify, on aesthetic grounds, work of a bygone period representing other artistic tastes. Truth is not only stranger than fiction, but more varied and more interesting, as well as more honest.

(7) Where missing features are to be replaced without sufficient evidence as to their own original form, due regard should be paid to the factors of period and region in other surviving examples of the same time and locality.

(8) Every reasonable additional care and expense is justified to approximate in new work the materials, methods and quality of old construction, but new work should not be artificially 'antiqued' by theatrical means.

(9) Work on the preservation and restoration of old buildings requires a slower pace than would be expected in new construction."

In spite of the very considerable progress made in historical preservation work in the ited States during the past twenty-five years, the published literature describing thods and techniques remains fragmentary and scattered. A few organizations regularly sue valuable publications, such as Old Time New England, a regional journal published by e Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Nevertheless, a regrettably rge number of technical reports on individual preservation projects, including some of e most important undertakings of recent years, are available only in manuscript form, if t all. The National Park Service has in preparation a bibliography of published technical ports which, when completed, should provide a suitable guide to the literature on this subject in the United States.

The most useful government documents relating to the general aspects of this problem re to be found in the National Park Service Administrative Manual. This comprehensive work, ich will ultimately include at least twenty-two volumes on the administrative and professional aspects of park and monument conservation, is issued in mimeographed form in a limited dition, primarily for the guidance of the Service staff. The four volumes most closely lating to the preservation of historic and architectural monuments are: volume nine, History anual; volume twelve, Master Plans, Construction Programs and Drawings; volume thirteen, ield Manual for Museums, and volume twenty-two, in progress, Ruins Stabilization Manual. ile these volumes, with the exception of that dealing with museums, are not distributed tside of the Federal Government, their preparation is evidence of a growing consciousness the need for fundamental professional publications in these highly specialized fields.

In an effort to make the experience reflected in such manuals more widely available, nd in order to benefit from the experience of others, the National Park Service recently joined with The American University of Washington, D.C. and with Colonial Williamsburg to launch an Institute for the Preservation and Interpretation of Historic Sites and Buildings.

sessions held from 6-24 June, 1949, the Institute provided a limited number of profes-
nal workers with an intensive review of basic policies and practices involved in the
reservation and exhibition of historic and architectural monuments. It is planned to
ke the Institute an annual event. From such undertakings, including the somewhat paral-
el Seminars in American History and Culture, conducted annually at Cooperstown, New York,
y the New York Historical Association, new additions to the literature of technique and
thod may be expected to come.

IV

Many historical and architectural monuments in the United States which it has not been
ssible to continue in their original uses are preserved as exhibits for public enjoyment.
e extent to which this trend is related to the growing opportunities for travel and the
der use of the automobile in recent decades has been vividly stated by Dr. Lawrence Vail
leman in Historic House Museums. "Then came the automobile - four cars registered in
95, eight thousand in 1900, nearly half a million in 1910, twenty-three million ... in
30. The same years that saw this miracle saw also - for related reasons - the rise of
storic houses, from about twenty open in 1895 to nearly a hundred in 1910 and to more than
ur hundred now (1933)." The steady increase of travel is continuing and in 1948, for
ample, almost a million persons entered the grounds of Mount Vernon, and more than ten
illion persons visited the historic and archaeological areas of the National Park Ssystem.
uring has become a national habit deeply rooted in American life; and public interest in
wing historic sites and buildings is part of a general growth in awareness of the Amer-
an background.

One of the consequences of these large increases in travel, however, has been the crea-
on of new pressures upon fragile historic and architectural monuments. Unless these pres-
res are carefully controlled, they can adversely affect the preservation of intangible
ements of feeling as well as the physical fabric itself. Some monuments affected by heavy
sitation contain fragmentary remains of prehistoric Indian settlements, such as the mag-
ificent ruins of ancient cliff dwellings in Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, where it
s been necessary in recent years to adopt new protective regulations to govern public use.
eater pressures from travel have developed, however, at certain heavily visited historic
uses in the eastern United States. Over one million persons have viewed the interior of
e Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt at Hyde Park, New York, for example, since it was publicly
ened as a national shrine in 1946. When visitors come in such numbers, not only do util-
arian facilities for public convenience, such as parking areas, tend to intrude into the
nument's surroundings, but the wearing impact of hundreds of thousands of persons walking
rough a structure designed only for domestic use may be readily imagined. The overall
fect of developments of this kind upon the perpetuation of the nation's heritage of scenic
d historic properties is the subject of constant study, not only by the National Park
rvice and its Advisory Board, but also by quasi-public societies which administer heavily
sited properties.

Another notable consequence of the upward travel trend is a growing recognition of the
ct that more and better educational aids are needed for the benefit of millions of visitors
eking to understand and enjoy the nation's historic and architectural monuments. The
alization that hundreds of thousands of school children are among these visitors has fur-
er stimulated the demand for the best interpretative aids that can be devised. In order
o avoid the pitfalls of local lore and legendary anecdotes purveyed by commercial guides,
t has become the policy of the National Park Service in meeting this demand to offer a
riety of educational aids for visitors to its areas, including escorted trips, lectures,
blications and museum exhibits. All of these are conducted or developed by trained

historians and museum curators in a manner commensurate with the dignity and significance of the nation's historical heritage. Many state and local governments and quasi-public societies, notably, Colonial Williamsburg, which administer heavily visited monuments of wide public interest and importance, follow similar policies. As a result, historic sites and buildings in the United States are beginning to play an active role in the cultural life of the nation, providing public educational services which effectively supplement the traditional offerings of schools, colleges, libraries and museums.

The fundamental historical, architectural and archaeological knowledge concerning an individual monument, upon which any worthy educational effort must be based, is not ordinarily available unless it has been obtained as a result of special researches by the staff of the administering agency. While in some cases invaluable data - often involving intimate collaboration of historian, architect and archaeologist - have been prepared in connection with planning, repair or rehabilitation projects, in many instances professional personnel must be specially assigned to research tasks related to educational objectives. Progress in this basic research, which must usually be correlated with other pressing duties by a limited staff, is frequently slow. Nevertheless, in recent years there have been a number of notable contributions to knowledge, particularly as a result of archaeological excavations of historic sites. In this category belong the comprehensive excavations conducted at Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the New World; the discovery during 1948 of the remains of the original Fort Raleigh on Roanoke Island in North Carolina, the oldest identifiable structure built by white men in what is now the United States; and the rediscovery during the past two years of the log foundations of such well-known pioneer structures as the Whitman Mission and the Hudson's Bay Company trading post at Fort Vancouver in the State of Washington. Such discoveries as these help to strengthen the lively interest in the American background which has developed in recent decades.

At the more fully staffed monuments in the United States, the results of fundamental historical, archaeological and architectural researches are presented to the public through a variety of media. Wherever trained personnel can be provided, a program of explanatory talks, special lectures, and escorted tours is usually made available to visitors. The effectiveness of these presentations is frequently enhanced by the use of such audio-visual aids as maps, charts, diagrams, models, recordings, kodaslides, historical markers and special exhibits. Correlated with these are historical leaflets, booklets and related publications written by scholars but in the laymen's language.

Among the most effective media of all have been the small, carefully planned installations of modern museum exhibits in separate buildings close by the historic or architectural sites or structures they are designed to explain. Such installations at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado and Morristown National Historical Park in New Jersey, for example, which include fine collections of original subjects as well as new graphic devices and dioramas, have been exceptionally well received by visitors. During 1949, similar museum exhibits were made ready and opened to the public at a number of additional monuments which hitherto lacked them. They not only make available for public inspection artifact materials recovered through archaeological excavations at the site, or other appropriate historic objects, but describe and interpret, without praise or blame, the historical facts pertaining to the structure or site. This movement may be expected to spread widely as a major element in the contribution of historic sites and buildings to popular education.

Through these varied ways, historic and architectural monuments in the United States are increasingly valued, not only by scholars as source material for understanding American history, but also by the wider public as part of their national heritage.